

Legislative Updates of interest for Higher Education: Week of Feb. 22-26, 2016

(Highlighted & bolded text is linked to source. Bill numbers go to the most recent version on the SC General Assembly website, www.scstatehouse.gov. This report is not intended to be all inclusive. For additional information on the 2016 session, see SC General Assembly website. For information reports on CHE's website, [Click Here](#))

In the House

- Work on the FY 2016-17 budget continued during the week with the full House Ways and Means Committee meeting throughout the week. By Thursday, the Committee adopted recommendations to be reported out for consideration of the House. The House is anticipated to deliberate the recommendations during the week of March 21. A copy of the committee spreadsheet as adopted on Thursday is available [Here](#). A brief article in *The State* on the budget is available [Here](#). The following briefly highlights some of the recommended funding included for CHE, the institutions, and student financial aid.
 - o For CHE, recommendations include: an increase of \$425,000 in recurring funds (\$125,000 for legal staffing and \$300,000 for core agency mission); increased SREB funds at \$242,212 (funded in lottery); and increased College Transition Need Based Grants of \$170,822. Authority provided to CHE in the lottery for scholarship administration and audit was decreased from the use of \$345,000 to \$250,000. Other agency requests (Agency Technology, PASCAL annualization, and Professor of the Year), were not funded.
 - o Scholarships (Palmetto Fellows, LIFE, and HOPE) are fully funded for growth. The increase funded was \$6,426,600. Lottery Tuition Assistance and SC National Guard College Assistance remain level as requested. Need-based Grant funding was increased by \$1,937,078 as was Tuition Grants which received an increase of \$2,534,474.
 - o For the public colleges and universities (includes technical colleges), an increase of \$28.1 million in recurring funds was provided which represents about a 6% increase in base funds. Nonrecurring funds provided totaled \$123.4 million. Rep. Merrill, Chair of the Ways and Means Higher Education Budget Subcommittee, also informed the committee that he planned to introduce bond funding for building maintenance projects for the colleges and universities when the debate reaches the floor.
 - o A pay raise for state employees of 1% was included and employee health and retirement plan increases are also funded.

Information is subject to change as the recommendations move through the process.

- House Education and Public Works Subcommittee met on Wednesday to consider [H.4833](#), Higher Education Governance Act. The subcommittee began its deliberations and is anticipated to meet again during the week of Feb. 29.

The subcommittee also met on Wednesday to take up [H.4521](#), Tucker Hipps Transparency Act. They adjourned debate and are anticipated to meet on the bill again during the week of Feb. 29.
- Several bills relating to K-12 education ([H.4936](#), [H.4937](#), [H.4938](#), and [H.4939](#)) as reported on previously were considered by the House, passed, and sent to the Senate on Thursday.

In the Senate

- On Wednesday, Senate Education met and passed out several bills relating to higher education including:
 - o [H.4639](#) relating to the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement was reported out favorably as recommended by the subcommittee and placed on the Senate Calendar on Thursday.
 - o [H.3037](#) relating to residency for tuition and fee purposes for military who have been honorably discharged and dependents was advanced by the committee amended with a favorable majority report and an unfavorable minority report. This bill, if enacted, provides a waiver of the 12 month physical presence requirement for veterans establishing residency in South Carolina. The bill was placed on the Senate Calendar on Thursday.
 - o [H.3534](#) relating to the Higher Education Excellence Enhancement Program and eligible institutions was advanced favorably with amendment and placed on the Senate Calendar on Thursday. This bill if enacted would enable Clinton College to be an eligible participant and also would codify Columbia College and Converse College which have been eligible by proviso as eligible institutions.

Senate Education also screened appointments including CHE member appointments for Chair (Tim Hofferth) and Statewide At Large (Devron Edwards). Both appointments were reported favorably to the full Senate for consideration.

For information on other bills of interest under consideration during the 2015-2016 Session, [CLICK HERE](#).